

Why Two Towns Will Celebrate Landing of Pilgrims

It Seems That Our Forefathers Didn't Step First on Plymouth Rock

By Arnold D. Prince

AFTER three hundred years the world—the word is used deliberately, because France, Holland and the entire Anglo-Saxon world are preparing to participate—is to have an opportunity to worship at two shrines in commemorating the tercentenary anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims in America.

Until recently a great many persons believed only one shrine—Plymouth, Mass.—was available. This historic hamlet, guarding the west portal of Cape Cod Bay, became indelibly identified in all men's minds as the place where the Pilgrims established their first permanent settlement on this side of the Atlantic and where, in spite of Indians, an inhospitable coast, hunger and deprivations, they helped lay the foundations of civil and religious liberty in this country.

The streets in Plymouth leading to the waterfront are never entirely free from persons, some from distant parts of the globe, going to the "landing place"; and few, indeed, are the villages, cities and towns in the United States which do not, in some home or public institution, treasure what is alleged to be a piece of the precious Pilgrim rock on which, according to song and story, the refugees from overseas met and gave thanks to God after completing their perilous voyage. In every place of instruction in the land, in the most modern edifices of brick and stone as in the humblest little red schoolhouses in the most remote rural communities, countless children have been taught the incidents of that episode and told to venerate it as one of the priceless heritages of American history.

Now the people of Massachusetts and the nation are preparing to celebrate the three hundredth anniversary of the landing, but Plymouth alone is not to be the center of it.

This time the almost equally famous little community of Provincetown, guarding the east portal of the bay, is to be included, and by this act another blow is to be dealt to a curious bit of "historical fiction" which persisted for several generations and which has not been erased, even yet, from the minds of many people.

No Quarrel Between Them

In justice to Plymouth and Provincetown, and to correct reports circulated in New England and other parts of the country, it should be explained here that there is nothing of jealousy between the two towns in preparing for the coming celebration. Of course, both are New England towns, and therefore by inclination and heritage tenacious of their rights and traditions.

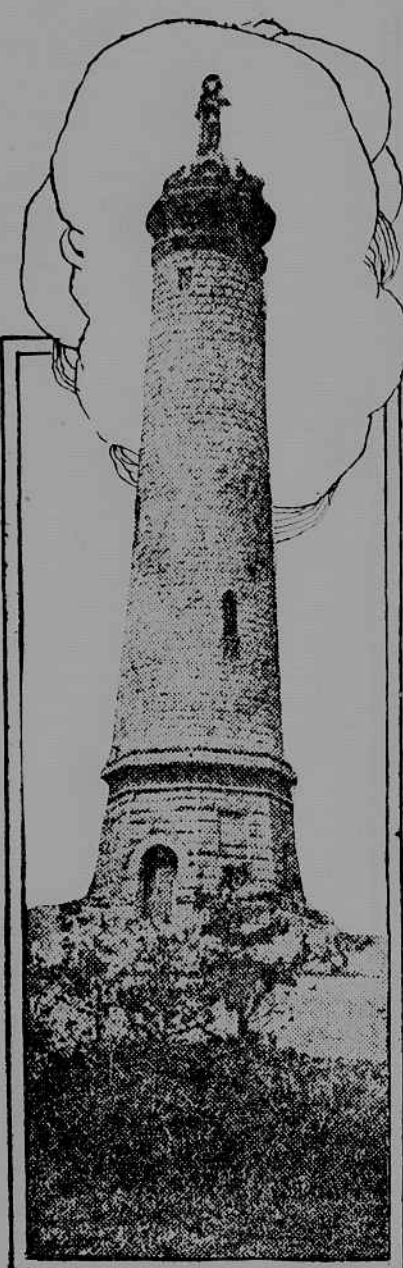
Plymouth holds nothing more sacred than its reputation as the "home of the forefathers" and would not yield that distinction at any cost. Provincetown is equally vigilant, as it proved recently when it caused the Legislature of Massachusetts to give it a separate appropriation for its part in the celebration and which it is continuing to prove by its request to Congress for separate Federal encouragement. But, having won what each considers its just share in the anniversary, the two towns are perfectly willing to work side by side in preparing for the big celebration which is to begin some time next year and last, possibly, twelve months.

The curious bit of "historical fiction" which the celebration will help to dispel is that the Pilgrim Fathers made their first landing at Plymouth and that they wrote there the famous "compact" which has been popularly, but erroneously, referred to since as the "birth of representative government" on the American continent.

In recent years historians have generally recognized—as do, for that matter, the people of Plymouth—that the first landing of the Pilgrim Fathers and, of course, mothers was actually made at Provincetown and that the "compact" was written in the cabin of the Mayflower while she lay at anchor in Provincetown harbor, more than a month before the settlement was founded at Plymouth.

One explanation for the rise of the "fiction" is that the temporary loss of the log or diary of the Mayflower deprived the early historians of the record of the stay at Cape Cod, but the spread of the error is scarcely more curious than is the story of the individual who, so far as Providence is concerned, was largely responsible for correcting it.

The story of this man is, to a certain extent, the story of Provincetown's rise to its present prominence



The Pilgrim monument at Plymouth

in the celebration preparations, and of the giant memorial monument which towers over the village.

On the day I visited Provincetown the weather had cleared, and the lofty monument jutted into the sky like some colossal pin planted by a giant hand to keep the village from slipping into the sea. About it clustered the community which virtually comprises the "claw" at the very tip of the cape. Far to the north there was a hint in the heavens of the nor'wester which, on the next day, was to batter to pieces a big schooner on a nearby shoal, but for the time the water stretched away to the south as unbroken as glass.

By an interesting coincidence the time of the year coincided, with only a few days' difference, with that when the Pilgrims, after landing at Provincetown, were exploring the coast for a place at which to establish a permanent settlement; and the weather, from the records, was also about what it was then.

Provincetown lies at the extreme end of a narrow neck of land which is scarcely more than three miles across at its widest point, and as the train swung down this narrow trail it passed among giant sand hills, which must have resembled



Plymouth Rock

those among which the Pilgrims, wearing their corselets and weapons, wandered in their first anxious days on the wind-swept coast.

At anchor in the harbor lay the fishing fleet, and it took no very great feat of the mind to imagine that one of them was the tiny caravel which had brought the forefathers across the Atlantic, and was waiting for them, even now, to report on their quest among the dunes for food and shelter.

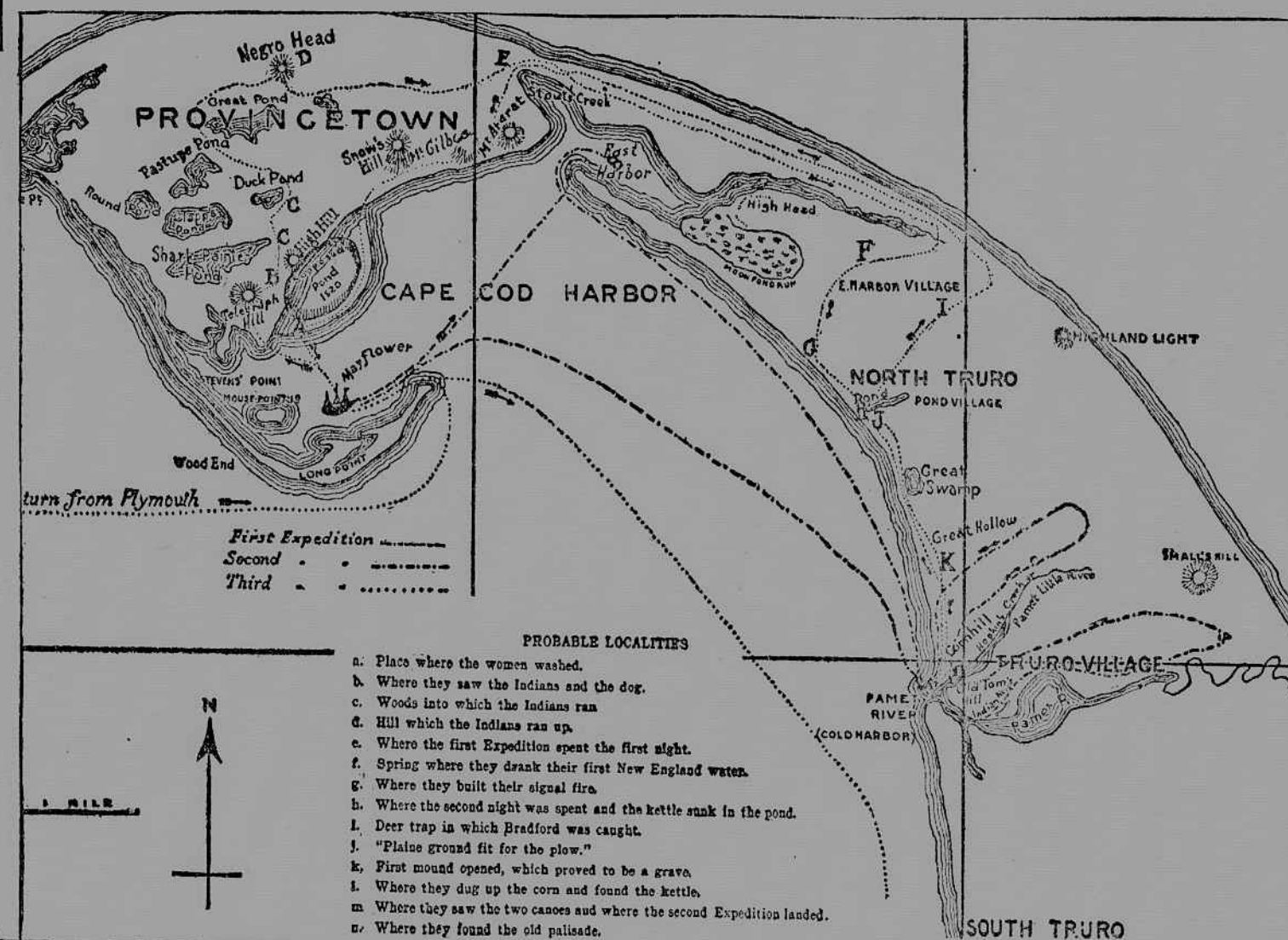
Coming down from Boston, the talk among the passengers—as where in the vicinity of the Cape Cod country isn't it these days?—had been of the coming tercentenary and the part Provincetown was to take in it.

Congressmen Kidnaped

A tall native, wearing a cloth peak cap with earflaps, told with much dry relish of the way the celebration committee from Provincetown had "kidnaped" an important delegation of Congressmen appointed to inquire into the tercentenary plans,



"The Mayflower," from the painting by William F. Halsall



Map of the early wanderings of the Pilgrims



"The Landing of the Pilgrims," from the painting by Sargeant

revenue cutter Androscoggin was in the harbor.

"Well, after everybody had shaken hands all around they talked things over and it was decided that the quickest and best way to get to Provincetown was to go aboard the Androscoggin and sail across the bay, and that's what happened. Only, as it was about 14 degrees below zero when the start was made, the going was a mite uncomfortable and became more so as the Androscoggin got out in the bay. It got so rough that Adams, who has lived here all his life, got seasick and some of the Congressmen were none too comfortable, I hear. But the committee got 'em here, all right, and they had a

nice meeting in the Town Hall, and before the Congressmen left they had a chance to look over the monument and see some of the things that ought to be done before the celebration."

The tall New Englander chuckled with the rest at the end of the story, but there was nothing of animus toward Plymouth in this, but merely a lively native appreciation of a shrewd achievement successfully carried out in a worthy cause.

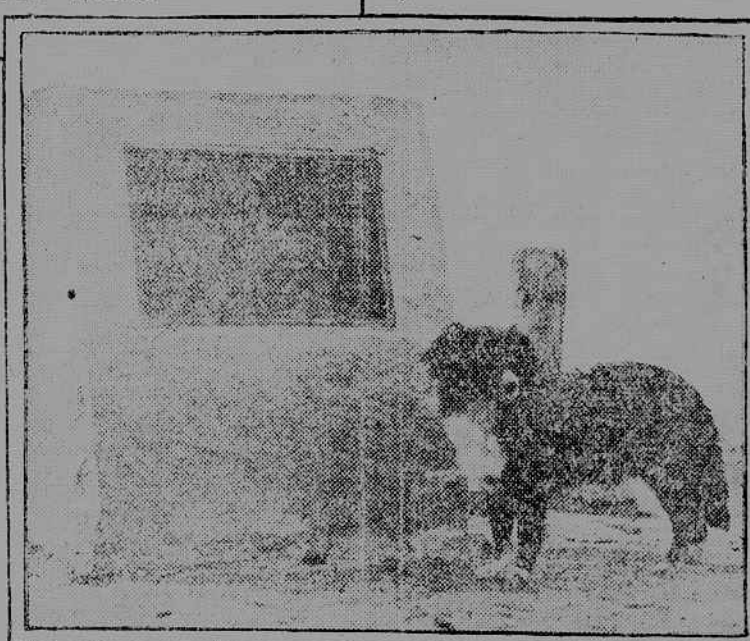
"Wonder what old 'Sea and Sand' would think about what's goin' on if he was alive to-day," mused the story-teller. "If it hadn't been for him Provincetown 'd probably still 'em here, all right, and they had a

ter, perhaps, than any other man in Provincetown, but I never knew exactly where he came from," said Mr. Hannum. "He was a queer-looking man, and people were always laughing at him. No one knew—or at least if they did I can't remember it now—how he made his living, and he was generally looked upon as eccentric."

Distrusted History

"He had an obsession that history couldn't be trusted, and was always saying that the men who wrote the books rarely told the facts. He said, for one thing, that the Pilgrims hadn't made their first landing in Plymouth at all, but in Provincetown, and that it was a shame the thing wasn't corrected."

"Now this was many years ago, and, although all of us knew in a vague way that the first landing had been made in Provincetown, the histories we read in the schools kept on telling of the landing in Plymouth—as if this had been the first and only one—and people just let it go at that. The thing had gained such wide circulation in the



Stone showing the landing place of the Pilgrims at Provincetown

Landing Day, and wouldn't be planning to take a hand at all in the tercentenary."

Afterward, I got the story of old "Sea and Sand" from Artemas P. Hannum, who was for eighteen years chairman of the School Board of Provincetown and is now head Selectman. Mr. Hannum is more than seventy years old, and his boyhood goes back to the days when Provincetown harbor was crowded with whalers, mackerel fishermen and the other intrepid souls who made their living "off the banks."

The Selectman's home is far west on Commercial Street—the narrow, winding thoroughfare which houses the town's stores and skirts the harbor so closely the water almost comes up to the very edge of the houses.

"I knew old 'Sea and Sand' bet-

For That Reason Provincetown Gets In on the Celebration

to Europe while it was on, on some sort of government business.

"But between the ending of the Civil War and his coming to Provincetown—I can't remember what year it was—Felt must have suffered reverses, for he had very little, if any, money when he landed here.

"By arguing and pleading he finally got a lot of us to chip in a dollar each and he started a publication he called 'Sea and Sand,' which was his nickname. None of us had very much money in those days and a dollar was a very important sum out here on the tip of Cape Cod, but Charlie pried off a dollar here and a dollar there until he got enough to pay for getting the publication going and then he began a campaign of education.

"Then old 'Sea and Sand' disappeared, and soon afterward we heard that he had died."

Looking back over the events which led to the erection of the 252-foot granite pillar on High Pole Hill in Provincetown and the present plans for giving the town joint honor with Plymouth in the tercentenary, chief credit for actual accomplishments must be given to the late J. Henry Sears, of Brewster, Mass.

"Sea and Sand" Did It

But no one can go among the village folk of Provincetown without recognizing the impetus that was given to the undertaking at the outset by that strange, homeless and admittedly eccentric individual, "Sea and Sand," who drifted into the village from a place no one knew where, and then died in some equally obscure place, which none of the villagers who owe him so much seems to remember.

It is now pretty well known throughout the United States that the Pilgrims made their first landing on American soil at Provincetown on November 11, 1620, according to the old style of reckoning by calendar, or November 21, according to the new.

The Mayflower, as is known, put into Provincetown harbor because the captain of the ship feared to risk being wrecked by trying to continue the voyage to Virginia, and it was after the vessel had dropped anchor that the famous "compact" was drawn up. Although this was not the first written constitution, it was one of the first, and contained the basic principles of government which later made the United States a free nation.

Ultimately a copy of the compact was engrossed on a bronze tablet and placed on a beautiful granite base in front of the Provincetown Town Hall.

From the records it appears that the Pilgrims spent until December 21, 1620, exploring the coast of Cape Cod for a suitable site for their settlement. During the month intervening between November 21 and December 21 the Mayflower remained anchored off Provincetown. The explorations along the coast were made in a shallop, and while these proceeded other companies of Pilgrims, sometimes headed by Captain Miles Standish, searched the inland on foot on a similar mission.

On December 21, 1620, ten men in the shallop landed on Plymouth Rock, and, after thanking God that their search had finally brought them to a place which was suitable as a permanent home, went back in the shallop to the Mayflower and reported what they had found. While these explorations were taking place, it may be pointed out, the first birth of a white child in New England had taken place at Provincetown. This was that of Peregrine White.

The Mayflower set sail as soon as possible for Plymouth, and on or about December 26 the voyage was finally completed and the colony established.

Plymouth may not start its celebration of the tercentenary until December 21, 1920, which is the anniversary of the day the ten landed on Plymouth Rock, but Provincetown may begin its part of the festivities earlier. One of the spectacles, no doubt, will be a new landing from a Mayflower, first at Provincetown and then at Plymouth.

The celebration in Plymouth will, of course, be on a much larger scale than in Provincetown, as Plymouth still holds first rank in the affections of the people in connection with Pilgrim history, but the little fishing village is looking forward with much eagerness to the increased tourist travel that will result from the tercentenary.

As one woman who earns her living from the summer inflow of visitors put it: "Well, bless old 'Sea and Sand' for havin' been foolish, anyway."